

Hobbes and the Reception of "Leviathan"

Author(s): Jon Parkin

Source: *Journal of the History of Ideas*, April 2015, Vol. 76, No. 2 (April 2015), pp. 289-300

Published by: University of Pennsylvania Press

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43948739>

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Hobbes and the Reception of Leviathan

Jon Parkin

The publication of Noel Malcolm's stunning new edition of *Leviathan* provides us with the tools to revisit many aspects of Hobbes's work, not least the subtle changes in the development of his arguments between the first English edition and the later Latin version. In his introductory volume, Malcolm exhumes textual evidence to demonstrate the ways in which the changes to the text register Hobbes's consciousness of, and response to, commentary upon his work.¹ Although there have been many treatments of the reception of Hobbes's works, Hobbes's reaction to his own reception has rarely received much consideration. Malcolm's thought-provoking suggestions in the edition prompt further reflection on this topic, and here I offer some preliminary remarks to this end.

At first glance thinking about Hobbes's reaction to his own reception may not appear to tell us much that we do not already know. Hobbes's remarks tend to be brutally dismissive and rarely seem to add much by way of theoretical argument. But there are reasons why we should pay more attention to Hobbes's engagement with *Leviathan's* reception. Although it is true that in print Hobbes tended to dismiss his critics, we should not take this to indicate either that he was unconcerned with what they said, or that his encounters with them were of no wider significance. Indeed, quite the opposite. When Hobbes did turn to confront his opponents he was usually

¹ Noel Malcolm, "General Introduction," in Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Noel Malcolm (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), vol. 1, esp. "From the English *Leviathan* to the Latin" (146–96).

doing at least three things, and all of them repay some study. Firstly and most obviously he was defending his work from particular forms of attack. But in responding to such attacks Hobbes always did more than simply restate his arguments. He also offered very distinctive accounts of his opponents and their motivation, together with carefully constructed statements about his own position and political identity. The creation of these dramatic *personae* lends these encounters a distinctively theatrical quality, but the dramatic presentation was often calibrated to serve a final cause and that was usually an attempt to secure the practical uptake of his ideas. So Hobbes's engagement with his own reception tells us quite a lot about Hobbes's priorities in terms of defining his identity as thinker and his specific ambitions for the doctrines of *Leviathan*.

In what follows I want to suggest that Hobbes had particular reasons to engage in this distinctive quasi-theatrical treatment of his critics; indeed, these encounters were important to Hobbes because they constituted his major response to one of the biggest problems that he faced as a political philosopher. This was his peculiar vulnerability to having his public identity shaped by his enemies. Structural features of his philosophy and his writing made it relatively easy for his critics to represent him in ways that regularly threatened to compromise the uptake of his ideas. Hobbes's direct responses to his critics always involved a deliberate attempt to recast both his own work and that of his critics so that he might be taken seriously by his audiences. Commentators sometimes imply that Hobbes did this by endorsing the agendas of particular groups and causes, but this suggestion, I would suggest, underestimates the subtlety of Hobbes's solution to his difficulty, which tracks his theoretical work on the nature of representation and personality.

I begin with Hobbes's identity "problem": partly this was to do with familiar features of his philosophy. Take the shape of his political theory, for example. As Hobbes himself noted, his political theory, with its concentration upon the mechanics of political power rather than its particular locations, had a double-edged quality that raised questions about the character of his ultimate political allegiance.² When this was coupled with the disconcerting suggestion that outward conformity in religious matters might well be at odds with one's inner beliefs, or the lack of them, then very serious questions about who Hobbes was and what he believed on a whole series of issues became and remained pressing issues.³

² Hobbes, *Seven Philosophical Problems* (London, 1682), sig. A3v.

³ See particularly the Naaman passage in chapter 42 of *Leviathan*. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 3: 784–87.

These issues were compounded by some of Hobbes's characteristic writing strategies, which also left his work open to reinterpretation by hostile readers. Hobbes's contemporaries, even those sympathetic to his cause, often noted that his arguments were hard, obscure, and ambiguous.⁴ The ambiguity sometimes provided benefits: the ambiguity of Hobbes's political views made the arguments available to multiple audiences.⁵ Theological ambiguity might serve as a defense against immediate accusations of heterodoxy. Connectedly, ambiguity might also be taken to be part of an approach designed to enlist the reader in working out the implications of the argument. Hobbes's partiality to the use of arresting paradoxical formulae may have been designed to prompt the reader's involvement in resolving apparent mysteries.⁶

Clearly such strategies came with serious weaknesses. The combination of ambiguity and underdetermination, coupled with deliberately shocking and paradoxical opinions, allowed unsympathetic commentators to find Hobbes guilty of a bewildering array of problematic positions, many of which we can be reasonably sure that he did not hold.⁷ Interpretations highlighting despotism and subversive individualism emerge from a theory arguably calculated to deter both. A similar effect arises from Hobbes's tendency to appropriate and colonize deceptively familiar controversial material: he could sometimes end up being associated with the conceptual structures that he was trying to subvert. Perhaps most dangerous for Hobbes were the constructions that could be built upon his theological ambiguities, and the ease with which charges of atheism could be construed from their consequences. Although it was true that Hobbes could always reject the claim *sensu stricto*, considerable damage was done by having to go through the kind of exchange encouraged by the peculiarities of his texts.

Hobbes was thus vulnerable to being represented by his opponents in

⁴ For a discussion of this point see Parkin, "Hobbes and Paradox," in *The Oxford Handbook of Hobbes*, ed. Kinch Hoekstra and Al P. Martinich (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

⁵ See the discussion in Jon Parkin, *Taming the Leviathan: The Reception of the Political and Religious Ideas of Thomas Hobbes in England, 1640–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 89–90; and Johan P. Sommerville, "Lofty Science and Local Politics," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hobbes*, ed. Tom Sorell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 267.

⁶ Parkin, "Hobbes and Paradox."

⁷ For a catalogue of errors that Hobbes did not hold, see for example, Al P. Martinich, "Law and Self-Preservation in *Leviathan*: On Misunderstanding Hobbes's Philosophy 1650–1700," in *The Persistence of the Sacred in Modern Thought*, ed. Chris L. Firestone and Nathan A. Jacobs (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012), 38–65.

damaging ways, and they tended to do this at moments when they feared that his views were gaining some purchase with those in authority. This significantly increased the importance of the reception process, and the character of Hobbes's response to it. Hobbes not only needed to reject compromising attempts to redescribe his work, but he also needed to offer an account of himself and his views which would allow his projects to survive in sometimes very hostile environments.

It is sometimes implied by commentators that Hobbes did this by adopting the agenda of particular groups, and when described in these terms Hobbes's arguments start to look remarkably partisan.⁸ But a preoccupation with quite narrow contextual circumstances can lead us to think about Hobbes's allegiance in overly specific terms. This is not to say that Hobbes was uninterested in joining the political fight, but Hobbes's representative *personae* were not necessarily designed to endorse identities of particular groups, even if they might allude to several. Indeed they were often designed to create new identities that went beyond existing partisan structures.

Hobbes's pattern of response to his own reception can be seen from his earliest published work, and in particular to *De cive*, where Hobbes directly addressed the critics of the first (1642) edition in the 1647 version of the text. He refused to engage with what he described as the self-interested criticism arising from three sources: churchmen complaining about his account of civil power; sectarians about liberty of conscience; and lawyers about his diminution of civil law.⁹ In each case Hobbes was not moved to do anything more than tie the knots of his arguments more tightly around the stereotypes to which he alludes. But he was nevertheless prepared to engage with those who, having followed their understanding rather than their passions, found themselves perplexed by Hobbes's discussion. But who were they, and what was Hobbes up to?

The annotations to the 1647 text sometimes read like concessions to particular groups, for example constitutional royalist Episcopalians, but the appearance here is skin-deep.¹⁰ Hobbes nods to concerns about constitutional constraint and the role of the clergy, but rather than substantially retooling his argument, what he offers is a distinctively Hobbesian redescription of those concerns; so that constitutional constraint can only make

⁸ See the arguments in Jeffrey R. Collins, *The Allegiance of Thomas Hobbes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁹ Hobbes, *On the Citizen*, ed. Richard Tuck and Michael Silverthorne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 15.

¹⁰ For Hobbes's engagement with constitutional royalism see Hobbes, *On the Citizen*, 83, 94; for his flirtation with Episcopalian language, see 224.

sense in terms of a distinctively Hobbesian sovereignty; the role of bishops might be acknowledged but together with a warning about the subversive character of *jure divino* episcopal claims.¹¹ The comments allowed for negotiations with Episcopalians like Henry Hammond and Robert Payne, but most contemporary observers realized that what was on the table was Hobbesian Anglicanism as opposed to Anglican Hobbism.¹² Hobbes's dalliance with the language of episcopal Anglicanism was part of a typically ambitious attempt to colonize and transform it. This approach would constitute a very distinctive pattern to Hobbes's engagement with various discourses during the years to come, a pattern that has often left historians slightly perplexed when trying to pin down the complexities of Hobbes's political identity.

The problems associated with Hobbes's identity were unsurprisingly deepened by *Leviathan*, and the circumstances surrounding its appearance, not least the philosopher's return to England. One of the most striking features of the early reception is that many readers were simply puzzled about Hobbes's position and his agenda.¹³ *Leviathan's* ambiguous status made the initial reception a surprisingly muted affair. In some ways this may have saved him from serious attacks. The royalist critiques that did appear tended to be curiously respectful exercises designed to discourage the future use of his texts.¹⁴ It might have been different if Hobbes had had more sway with his new masters. Only Richard Baxter and the Presbyterians sought to construct Hobbes as a threat to be dealt with by the authorities, but their partisan critique appears to have been viewed with little wider enthusiasm.¹⁵ Unsurprisingly Hobbes did not bother to respond, perhaps content with the relative silence that gave the book a slow-burning, as opposed to a book-burning, impact.

Hobbes was always in more danger whenever it looked as if *Leviathan* had gained traction with those in power. As Noel Malcolm has shown, *Leviathan's* association with the cause of radical university reform seems to have prompted the attacks upon him in the middle of the decade by Seth

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 81.

¹² For the response of Hammond and Payne see Parkin, *Taming the Leviathan*, 63–65, 68–70.

¹³ For examples see Parkin, *Taming the Leviathan*, 97–103.

¹⁴ Robert Filmer, *Observations Concerning the Originall of Government* (London, 1652); Alexander Ross, *Leviathan Drawn Out With a Hook* (London, 1653); Henry Hammond, *A Letter of Resolution* (London, 1653).

¹⁵ See Jeffrey R. Collins, "Silencing Thomas Hobbes: The Presbyterians and *Leviathan*," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hobbes's Leviathan*, ed. Patricia Springborg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 478–500.

Ward and John Wallis.¹⁶ Combined with John Bramhall's publication of the detail of the 1640s free will debate, Hobbes now found himself attacked by critics who systematically attacked almost every element of his work.¹⁷

Hobbes clearly had defensive reasons to respond, not least because of the reputational damage involved. But the character of the response is interesting because he once again sought to use the opportunity to turn defense into attack, with a fairly specific objective in mind, in this case winning Oxford University to his cause. This may sound absurdly ambitious, but the relative weakness of his opponents and the controversial nature of their claims seem to have made it plausible to Hobbes. Bramhall was a royalist exile. In an Oxford dominated by Independents, the Episcopalian Ward and the Presbyterian Wallis commanded little sympathy, personal or confessional. Indeed Hobbes seems to have realized that the circumstances were ripe to stage the discussion of his work as a dramatic confrontation between the forces of light and the forces of the Kingdom of Darkness.

Although Hobbes would suffer some long-term damage to his scientific reputation, he was surprisingly successful in heading off some of his opponents' major accusations, particularly their potentially dangerous insinuations of atheism. Here the ambiguities of *Leviathan*, and the tentative nature of the early reception counted in Hobbes's favor, and he made use of them. As he memorably put it to Ward and Wallis, "But do many other men, as well as you, read my *Leviathan*, and my other books? And yet they all find not such enmity in them against religion."¹⁸ Strikingly, both Bramhall and Ward publicly retracted, or at least toned down, their accusations of atheism. Bramhall was forced to explain that he had not accused Hobbes of atheism "in the concrete," but only in the abstract "without charging the person with formal atheism or blasphemy."¹⁹ Ward made an equally unhappy clarification that he would not ascribe "that dreadful crime of atheism to this man," even if he proclaimed himself unable to explain Hobbes's account of God.²⁰

But Hobbes also set about reconstructing his own public *persona*. This

¹⁶ Noel Malcolm, "Hobbes and the Royal Society," in *Aspects of Hobbes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 317–35.

¹⁷ For Bramhall's long-running dispute with Hobbes, see Nicholas D. Jackson, *Hobbes, Bramhall and the Politics of Liberty and Necessity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

¹⁸ Hobbes, *English Works*, ed. William Molesworth (London: Bohn, 1845), 7: 350.

¹⁹ John Bramhall, *Works*, ed. J.H. Parker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1845), 4: 418–19.

²⁰ Seth Ward, *In Thomae Hobbii philosophiam exercitation epistolica* (Oxford, 1656), 340.

was an exercise in repositioning which constituted a major response to the issues surrounding the production of *Leviathan* and his reappearance in England. Again it is not necessary to see this episode as an attempt by Hobbes to link himself to a particular faction. Hobbes was careful to present himself as a sensible and law-abiding English layman whose views promoted political quietism; not so much a cheerleader for Cromwellian policies in particular so much as those that would produce stability in general—notably framing the minds of potentially wavering gentlemen to *present* government, not *the* present government.²¹ Equally, he presented himself as someone prepared to countenance sensible forms of clerical authority of all stripes, an apologist for an entirely scriptural account of Christianity, and moreover one who showed persuasive evidence of a deep familiarity with the work of the Protestant Reformers.²²

This naturally constituted a dramatic contrast to his representation of his opponents. Bramhall was cast as a careerist prelate whose material self-interest encouraged him to maintain absurd doctrines that “hath cost many thousands of men their lives.”²³ Bramhall became the embodiment of scholastic excess. Hobbes suggested that his parroting of empty jargon had become so bizarre that the Bishop had lost his grip on his native language, part of a general capitulation to the alien and ultimately Popish discourse of the Schools.²⁴ Ward and Wallis were also schoolmen masquerading as natural philosophers, their trademark language of abstract essence and immaterial substance serving as signs, noted Hobbes, that both they and their language were “under the servitude” of clerics “that seek as the Roman clergy did, to draw all human learning to the upholding of their power ecclesiastical.”²⁵

Evidently Hobbes was not interested in reconciliation or negotiation here; these were straw representations designed to induce aversion in an audience who might identify with Hobbes's *persona* in a script dramatizing the clash between larger world views. In that sense Hobbes's net is being cast wider than the Independent Congregationalists.²⁶ Although messages about political quietism were inevitably going to be attractive to those in authority, they were also aimed at former royalists who had made peace

²¹ Hobbes, *English Works*, 7: 336.

²² For this dimension of Hobbes's work see Jurgen Overhoff, *Hobbes's Theory of the Will* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000).

²³ Hobbes, *English Works*, 5: 176.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 5: 352–53.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 7: 348.

²⁶ The thought that Hobbes's position was close to the Independents is explored by Jeffrey R. Collins, in *The Allegiance of Thomas Hobbes*, esp. chap. 6.

with the regime, men like Henry Pierrepont, the Marquess of Dorchester, the legally and medically trained compounder to whom Hobbes dedicated his arguments.²⁷ The William Prynne-style attacks on Laudianism in all but name also potentially appealed to a broad readership, and one that didn't exclude a fairly broad clerical audience.²⁸ Hobbes's arguments were not designed to alienate all of the churchmen; as Hobbes noted, he had merely pointed out that the clergy's office was ministerial rather than magisterial "and all this without any word tending to the disgrace of Episcopacy or Presbytery."²⁹ Hobbes's doctrine was, he noted, "generally received" by all the clergy except for those who did not see it in their interest to be subject to the civil power.

These categories captured some of the diversity of the wider academic community at Oxford, clearly the audience for his epic and sometimes comic presentation. Hobbes pointedly challenged Ward and Wallis's claims to represent the university. Their critiques were, on his account, pieces of private enterprise consistent with their subversive hidden agenda. In reorganizing his own notorious arguments about the defects of the universities in *Leviathan* Hobbes sketched a more flattering portrait in which Oxford and Cambridge were in fact, after the purges of the 1640s, Hobbesian institutions properly regulated by the civil power, by implication inhabited by the sort of men who might be capable of digesting the doctrine of *Leviathan*, "as to fit it better for a publique teaching."³⁰

Although there is evidence that Hobbes did have some local success with his audiences in Oxford it is clear that the lingering suspicions about the nature of his project meant that his own representation of the reformed university with its home-brewed version of Hobbesian doctrine would be at best difficult to realize. Even his most optimistic acolyte Henry Stubbe was forced to admit that the local campaigns against him had taken their toll.³¹ They would inevitably cast a long shadow over the following decades, but this did not put a stop to Hobbes's aggressive attempts to remarket his projects.

Hobbes's next major engagement with the reception of *Leviathan* came

²⁷ For Dorchester see P. R. Seddon's article in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Pierrepont was the dedicatee of Hobbes's *Six Lessons*.

²⁸ For the similarity between Hobbes's position and Prynne's attacks on the Laudians see Jackson, *Hobbes, Bramhall and the Politics of Liberty and Necessity*, chap. 3.

²⁹ Hobbes, *English Works*, 5: 454.

³⁰ Hobbes, *Six Lessons* (1656): 60.

³¹ Hobbes, *The Correspondence of Thomas Hobbes*, ed. Noel Malcolm (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 1: 449.

in 1662. One might have expected trouble to come sooner, but the Restoration itself left him at first more or less unmolested. Obvious reasons for this were his successful reconciliation with Charles II and the legal protection afforded by the Act of Oblivion and Indemnity, but perhaps the most compelling reason was that he no longer looked like a significant ideological threat. Things only changed when Hobbes himself attempted to promote his scientific work and attack Wallis into the bargain.³² Unsurprisingly, Ward and Wallis responded in ways that revived the accusations of disloyalty and atheism arising from *Leviathan*.³³ Hobbes's response was now more carefully differentiated between his Anglican and Presbyterian detractors. Hobbes trod carefully around the former in his unusually defensive *Apology* for himself and his writings, referring to his legal protection, denying that he still maintained the doctrine of the book and calling upon Episcopalian witnesses to confirm his theism.³⁴ The phrasing suggests an attempt to deter any more substantial action against him by making it clear to his clerical enemies that the trial of Thomas Hobbes would be unlikely to succeed. *Mr Hobbes Considered*, published a few months later, was a more traditionally robust Hobbesian exercise in updating his *persona*, this time to take advantage of the political embarrassment of the Presbyterians. Now anti-Presbyterian and decisively anti-Cromwellian, Hobbes was a loyal supporter of the Crown who had helped royalists to preserve their estates. This was in contrast to Wallis, the Parliamentary cryptographer and the real traitor in the story.³⁵ The audience for the drama this time seems to have been the court, the script a heroic narrative of loyalty and betrayal that paved the way for more significant influence.

The response from Hobbes's opponents was to use censorship to deny Hobbes the oxygen of publicity, but it is clear that Hobbes had no intention of meekly surrendering to such constraints. Now an old man in a hurry, Hobbes busied himself with projects that included the Latin works and possibly early drafts of *Behemoth*, aligning himself conspicuously with the anti-Clarendonian faction at court.³⁶ This may well have prompted them to

³² For Hobbes's assault on Wallis, see Douglas M. Jesseph, *Squaring the Circle* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), chap. 6.

³³ Seth Ward, *Against Resistance of Lawful Powers. A Sermon Preached at White-Hall, November 5, 1661* (London, 1661); and John Wallis, *Hobbius heauton-timorumenos* (London, 1662).

³⁴ An English translation can be found in Hobbes, *Seven Philosophical Problems* (London, 1682), sigs. A2v–A3v.

³⁵ Hobbes, *Mr Hobbes Considered* (London, 1662).

³⁶ For Hobbes's activity during this period, and the dating of *Behemoth*, see Paul Seaward's remarks in the introduction to Hobbes, *Behemoth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 6–10.

take action, as is suggested by the Parliamentary discussion of Hobbes's work in 1666.³⁷ This agitation initially presented little danger to Hobbes, who, perhaps rather pointedly, got on with writing the new Latin version of *Leviathan*.³⁸ However, the demise of Clarendon's administration in 1667, and the systematic side-lining of the episcopal hierarchy that followed appear to have concentrated the minds of Hobbes's enemies, who were now anxious about the thought that Hobbes and *Leviathan* might now have some purchase upon the new administration. That autumn anti-atheism legislation targeting *Leviathan* was reactivated. The Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford, Richard Allestree, attacked Hobbes before the King himself.³⁹

In the changed circumstances Hobbes's response showed a willingness to deal with clerical enemies more aggressively. In *Behemoth* Hobbes savaged Allestree and attacked the universities as Trojan horses for clericalism constituting the "coar of rebellion."⁴⁰ The illocutionary force of the argument should probably be seen as an encouragement to the Crown to purge Oxford of its neo-Laudian pretensions.⁴¹ Hobbes's idealized model of the pacified and reformed university appears at the end of the first dialogue, this time complete with a *Leviathan*-like doctrine suitably summarized for practical use.⁴²

In March 1668 the clergymen went after Hobbes in the House of Lords, exploring the possibility of prosecuting him for heresy.⁴³ Hobbes's immediate response to what appears to have been a real threat was to compose the writings in the appendix to the Latin *Leviathan*, and the Chatsworth heresy manuscript.⁴⁴ Once the immediate danger had passed Hobbes decided to put together a more public statement, and this, once, again, led him to recast his position and those of his enemies, in his *Answer to Bramhall's 1658 work Catching the Leviathan*, and the *Historical Narration Concerning Heresy*.

³⁷ For discussion of this episode see Jon Parkin, "Baiting the Bear: The Anglican Attack Upon Hobbes in the Later 1660s," *History of Political Thought* 34 (2013): 421–58.

³⁸ The information that we have about the composition of the Latin *Leviathan* suggests that it was started towards the end of 1666, shortly after the Parliamentary attack. This would tend to confirm the thought that Hobbes was not unduly troubled by the first mention of his name and his book in Parliament. See Hobbes, *Correspondence*, 2: 693–96.

³⁹ House of Lords Record Office, Main Papers, 14 October 1667; Richard Allestree, *A Sermon Preached before the King* (London, 1667), 6–8.

⁴⁰ Hobbes, *Behemoth*, 169, 172.

⁴¹ See Jon Parkin, "Hobbes in the later 1660s," *Historical Journal* 42 (1999): 105 n. 68.

⁴² Hobbes, *Behemoth*, 182–83.

⁴³ For this incident see Parkin, "Baiting the Bear."

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

It might seem odd to attack the long-dead Bramhall at this point, but there is evidence that Hobbes was responding to the use of that text in the Parliamentary proceedings.⁴⁵ The move also allowed Hobbes a relatively safe way to attack the views of live and dangerous enemies: Hobbes's Bramhall reprises his role as the representative of the Kingdom of Darkness, but also stands as a proxy for Hobbes's assailants.⁴⁶

Hobbes once more sought to adjust his *persona*. In the *Answer*, as Mark Goldie's forthcoming edition makes clear, Hobbes casts himself as a scrupulously loyal Anglican, appealing to the Book of Common Prayer, the Homilies, the Canons and the jurisdictional fabric of the Henrician and Elizabethan reformations.⁴⁷ In some ways the portrait recalls the "Jacobean" religion of Hobbes's youth.⁴⁸ But the similarities here are deceptive.⁴⁹ Although Hobbesian Anglicanism alluded to mainstream traditions, it defies attempts to situate it in any existing Protestant creeds, and the version in the *Answer to Bramhall* is no different in proposing yet another potentially transformative Anglican identity.

This raises again the question of audience. Hobbes's script here is recognizably Anglican with a harder line against high flying prelacy. The criticism of the Presbyterians, a major feature of *Behemoth*, is also much more muted. The tone recalls some of the comments critical of the church voiced in Parliament during the autumn and spring of 1668, when the House of Commons at least contemplated selling off church property.⁵⁰ Some of these arguments were critical of the persecutory tendencies of the church. Perhaps after seeing off his clerical enemies in 1668, Hobbes felt that it was appropriate to appeal to sympathetic MPs, who might constitute a new front against the over mighty clergymen. There are some surprisingly positive remarks about Parliament in the *Answer to Bramhall*, and the *Dialogue Concerning the Common Law*.⁵¹ Again, this is not to suggest that Hobbes had suddenly become a supporter of Parliamentary sovereignty, but rather of a characteristically Hobbesian vision of Parliament, a Parliament that

⁴⁵ Hobbes, *English Works*, 4: 282.

⁴⁶ See Noel Malcolm's comments in Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 1: 156.

⁴⁷ Thomas Hobbes, *On Heresy and Church History*, ed. Justin Champion and Mark Goldie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming 2014).

⁴⁸ For Hobbes's "Jacobeanism" see Al P. Martinich, "Law and Self-Preservation in *Leviathan*: On Misunderstanding Hobbes's Philosophy 1650–1700," at 38–39.

⁴⁹ Franck Lessay, "Hobbes's Protestantism," in *Leviathan after 350 Years*, ed. Tom Sorell and Luc Foisneau (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 265–94.

⁵⁰ See Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, ed. Robert Latham and William Matthews (London: Bell, 1971), 9: 36 (23 January 1668); cf. 45, 347, 473; Anchitell Grey, *Debates of the House of Commons, 1667–1694* (London, 1763), 1: 108.

⁵¹ See Hobbes, *Answer*, ed. Mark Goldie, n. 445.

properly understood its relationship with sovereign power and which might perhaps be enlisted against the forces of darkness.

This last point underlines the consistent feature of Hobbes's strategy of self-representation. His willingness to reframe his identity never reduces to the simple endorsement of particular agendas, but usually involves a subtle attempt to assimilate those agendas to his own distinctive vision of the political and religious world. Anglicanism, Presbyterianism, Independency, Parliament, and the universities were all entities that Hobbes was prepared to take seriously, but only if they were consistent with his political theory: ecclesiastical and institutional arrangements had to acknowledge the authority of a Hobbesian state. Indications of sympathy towards them always rested upon this condition. This was something that his theory, which focused upon the power relationships underlying nominal institutional identities, allowed him to do, and it was something that turned what looked like defensive maneuvers into subtle forms of attack, an attempt to link all forms of representation back to the authority of the sovereign.

The approach lay at the heart of the political theory of *Leviathan*, deeply concerned as it was with questions of personality and representation. Strikingly, Hobbes's representation of himself and his views exemplified the same strategy.⁵² Hobbes represented himself, in a number of contexts, as the ideal subject of a Hobbesian commonwealth, with the institutional allegiances to match.

Hobbes's indefatigable attempts to reconstitute his identity and to impose his transformative agendas reveal his characteristic determination to respond to the reception of *Leviathan* with carefully calibrated attempts to secure the uptake of his ideas. We are accustomed to thinking of Hobbes's encounters with his critics as rear-guard actions by a philosopher under siege, and often as slightly disingenuous attempts to curry favor with those in power. But this may be to misunderstand what Hobbes was up to when he turned and fought his opponents. It may be better to think of Hobbes's encounters with his critics rather as moments when Hobbes was in fact attempting to convert the truths of speculation into the utility of practice.

Oxford University.

⁵² See the particularly helpful discussion in Julie E. Cooper, "Thomas Hobbes on the Political Theorist's Vocation," *The Historical Journal* 50 (2007): 519–47.